

VZCZCXRO1625
PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHAD #4529 3551712
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 211712Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7938
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 0552
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0844
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1135

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 004529

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [AE](#) [UK](#) [IR](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: UK PRIME MINISTER BLAIR VISITS UAE

REF: ABU DHABI 4501

Classified By: CDA MARTIN QUINN, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (U) British Prime Minister Tony Blair arrived in Abu Dhabi December 19 for an official two-day visit to the UAE as part of a regional tour. Blair held meetings with UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Armed Forces Deputy Supreme Commander Mohammad bin Zayed al-Nahyan on December 19, and Vice President and Ruler of Dubai Mohamed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum on December 20. Meetings reportedly explored mechanisms for developing bilateral cooperation on the issues of the Palestinian peace process and in countering the activities of Iran.

12. (U) On December 21, English daily "Khaleej Times" reported that Blair laid out a "three-point formula" of immediate priorities to help fix the fractured Middle East peace process, including a meeting between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Premier Ehud Olmert. Prime Minister Blair called for an "alliance of moderation" to counter Iran and challenge its influence in the region. During a December 20 press briefing in Dubai, Blair is reported to have warned Tehran against "openly supporting terrorism in Iraq, trying to turn out a democratic government in Lebanon, and flaunting the international community's desire for peace in Palestine." AFP reported the following day Iran complaints that Blair's call for Muslim countries to form an alliance against the Islamic Republic were intentionally divisive and "hostile." Iran Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini described Blair's comments in Dubai as a "British scheme to create disunity." "The negative and divisive approaches of the British and the unilateral war mongering policies of Blair and Bush are the cause of public hatred in the region."

MFA Readout

13. (C) MFA Acting U/S Tariq Al Haidan told Charge that from the UAE perspective PM Blair had "a very good visit." The U/S said Blair had &put his finger on a number of Middle East problems8) including identifying the issue with Iran. "Iran," Al Haidan said, "is part of the problem itself."

UK Ambassador Perspective

4.(C) British Ambassador Edward Oakden told Charge that the Blair visit had two central focal points: (1) bilateral relations (political, economic, educational, cultural) and (2) regional especially the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Oakden noted that Blair explained to the UAE that Iraq cannot be solved by troops alone but by responding to regional concerns including the "underlying drumbeat of the Palestinian issue." Talking through with the UAE leadership

how to get Syria to adopt "a more sensible position," Blair also made the case for denying Hamas support -- despite their "democratic mandate." UAE interlocutors, Oakden said, expressed concerns about Iran,s "bully boy" tactics and their worries about potential confrontation. The visit, the first by a British Prime Minister in 10 years, resulted in a joint communique.

Asad Visit

5.(C) On this week's Bashar Al-Asad visit (reftel), Oakden said he concluded from the Blair meetings that the Emiratis had indeed pressed the Syrian president, in their typical non-confrontational way, on Lebanon, urging Bashar not to let the country degenerate into civil war.

6.(C) Comment: According to our observation, Blair and Asad visits, following one day apart, seem to have been handled identically from the public/media optic. UAE English papers emphasized Blair's Iran remarks and hostile reaction from Tehran while the UAE Arabic press highlighted the strong bilateral ties theme with special attention to Blair,s joking reference to London as "the 8th Emirate." End comment.
QUINN